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## The University of Texas at Austin's experience with the "Top 10 Percent" Law

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AUSTIN, Texas—The University of Texas at Austin conducts its undergraduate admission program under guidelines established by the "Top 10 Percent" Law (officially House Bill 588) that guarantees that Texas high school graduates who rank in the top 10 percent of their senior class be admitted to any state institution of higher learning.

At a White House briefing on Jan. 15, White House spokesman Ari Fleischer highlighted the program Bush spearheaded as governor of Texas. Bush opposed racial preferences at state universities, opting instead for a program he calls "affirmative access," under which the top 10 percent of all high school students are eligible for admission.

The University of Texas at Austin, while following this policy, in 1997 adopted a "holistic" approach to admissions.

Variables in the "holistic" approach are factors such as the student's academic record that includes class rank, completion of high school curriculum required by The University of Texas at Austin and the extent to which the student exceeded the university's required units. Among the "personal achievement" variables considered are the student's record for leadership, awards, extracurricular activities, work experience, socio-economic status of the family and school attended, and other factors. Students also must demonstrate their writing ability on two essays.

The University of Texas at Austin has effectively compensated for the loss of affirmative action, partly by increasing recruiting and financial aid for minority students. About 50 percent of its incoming first-year class includes "top 10 percent" qualifiers. The other half is admitted using normal admission criteria. Last fall, the first-year class included 272 African Americans, or 3.4 percent of the total of 7,936. It also included 1,138 Hispanics, or 14.3 percent of the total. The percentage of entering African American and Hispanics in fall 1996, the year the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals' decision struck down the use of affirmative action in Texas, was 4 and 14, respectively.

President Bush announced on Jan. 15 that the U.S. Justice Department will file a brief with the U.S. Supreme Court outlining the administration's opposition to the University of Michigan's affirmative action program.

The undergraduate admission process at the University of Michigan involves a point system where African American, Hispanic and Native American applicants earn 20 "bonus" points on the basis of race out of a 150-point system.

Bush called the system "a quota system" that rejects or accepts students "based solely on race," which he said is "impossible to square with the Constitution."

"We do not have, and have never had, quotas or numerical targets in either the undergraduate or Law School admissions programs," said University of Michigan President Mary Sue Coleman. "Academic qualifications are the overwhelming consideration for admission to both programs."

The Supreme Court's decision will define the role of affirmative action in the United States.

The links below provide information about The University of Texas at Austin's admission policies.

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